

THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST

NO. 2553

A SERMON
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*“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping,
that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction,
whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.
Philippians 3:18-19*

IT would seem, dear friends, that there have been trials and difficulties connected with the church of Christ in every age. We dream that our temptations are worse than those of our fathers, but they are not. We fancy that the church is subject to worse diseases than in her early days, but it is not so. Paul had to complain that, even in the church at Philippi, which was about as good as any, and in some respects much better than most of the churches, there were false teachers, and false living men, who professed to be followers of Christ, but who were in fact the worst enemies of the cross of Christ.

One thing I wish, and that is, that instead of brooding over our present difficulties, we would take them to the Lord in prayer and faith, and so triumph over them, but at the same time, I wish that we had the same tenderness of heart for the glory of God which was felt by the apostle, that we were as sensitive as he was of anything that reflected upon the divine honor, as jealous as he was, even to tears, lest any who professed to be the friends of the cross should, by their lives, turn out to be its worst enemies.

Oh, for more of Paul's zeal for God as the great motive power of our life, so that we might feel that it mattered little how anything else went so long as the grace of Christ triumphed, and men were saved, and God's name was glorified! The Lord bring us to that state of mind! We shall then feel the sins of today even more acutely than we do at present, but we shall the more confidently trust in God as we seek to overcome them.

I am not going to confine the text to its immediate connection with the church at Philippi, but I shall take it on a somewhat larger scale. Is it not startling to read of “enemies of the cross of Christ”? One would naturally have supposed that a remedy so wondrous and as effectual as the atonement would have been gladly received by souls sick unto death with sin. It might have been prognosticated by any man who judged concerning the future, that no sooner would the Son of God descend from heaven to earth, and die to put away human sin, than men would come flocking by millions to adore Him, and would feel as if they could not give Him a sufficiently hearty welcome.

Ay, but the fact that there ever was a cross shows how depraved is the human heart, how great the fall that needed such a sacrifice, how deep the depravity that committed such a murder as that of Calvary. Man, you are beside yourself indeed, and gone back out of the way, and therefore it is not full of wonder that you should be an enemy of the cross of Christ.

Yet it seems very startling to me as I picture the scene—a bleeding Christ and enemies gathered about the cross whereon He dies for them! Then, a weeping apostle warning the church of God, the messenger of Christ in tears as he delivers the warning, yet Christ's enemies still unmoved, perhaps pretending to be His friends, but remaining hostile to Him all the while.

It is a strange conglomerate of singular things—a Savior full of love, and man full of hate, a preacher with a heart so broken that he rather weeps than preaches, and a congregation with hearts so hard, that though he has told them the truth again and again, they do not regard it. Let that striking mixture of opposing elements stand before you now while I begin to expound the text.

I. First, let us inquire, WHAT IS THIS CROSS OF CHRIST to which some men are sadly said to be enemies?

Of course, it is *not the material cross*. It is not anything made in the shape of the cross. There are some who can fall down, and adore a cross of wood, or stone, or gold, but I cannot conceive of a greater wounding of the heart of Christ than to pay reverence to anything in the shape of a cross, or to bow before a crucifix. I think the Savior must say, "What! What! am I the Son of God, and do they make even Me into an idol? I who have died to redeem men from their idolatries, am I Myself taken, and carved, and chiseled, and molten, and set up as an image to be worshipped by the sons of men?"

When God says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them," it is a strange fantasy of human guilt that men should say, "We will even take the image of the Son of God, or some ghastly counterfeit that purports to be His image, and will bow down and worship it, as if to make the Christ of God an accomplice in an act of rebellion against the commandment of the holy law."

No, it is not the material cross to which Paul alludes, we have nothing to do with these outward symbols now. We might have used them much more, but they have been so perverted to idolatry that some of us almost shudder at the very sight of them.

What is the cross of Christ then? Well, first, it is that doctrine which is the center of His holy religion, *the doctrine of the atonement*. By the cross, we mean that the Son of God did actually and literally die, nailed to a Roman gibbet as a malefactor, numbered with the transgressors, doing this because He had, of His own voluntary will taken upon Himself the sin of His people, and being found with that sin upon Him, He must expiate it by His death. He must lay down His life, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God," as it is written, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Now, they who oppose this doctrine are "the enemies of the cross of Christ," and they who accept this atonement, and repose their entire confidence upon it, are the friends of the cross of Christ. They think of that sacrifice on Calvary with reverence linked with love. They never know how sufficiently to speak of it with adoring gratitude that ever such a Victim should have been presented, the Father Himself giving Him, and that such a Victim should ever have been slain, the Lord resigning His life for us.

Oh, it is wonderful, and more than wonderful, a miracle that carries every other miracle within itself, greater and diviner than all the deeds whereof poets have sung, even though they be the deeds of God Himself, for in this He has excelled Himself.

***"God, in the person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone."***

They are "the enemies of the cross of Christ," who try to belittle this great atonement, and to make it out to be a very small affair, next to nothing in importance. As I have often said of some preachers, they teach that Jesus Christ did something or other, which in some way or other, is in some measure or other, connected with our salvation. We do not teach any such hazy ideas as that, we say that He laid down His life for the sheep, and that for those sheep He has made a perfect, complete and effectual redemption, by which He has delivered them from the wrath to come. Blessed is he who rejoices in that doctrine of the cross of Christ!

But by the cross is sometimes meant in Scripture, *the Gospel which is the outflow of that central doctrine*. And what is that Gospel? Why, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," and that "He hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," which word of reconciliation is this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." This is the Gospel which we proclaim, "For

God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

As we preach this Gospel to the sons of men, we hear Christ crying to them through us, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” It is a promise of free, instantaneous, perfect, irreversible, everlasting pardon to all who will believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, for He is—mark this word—“the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

Other salvation there is none than that which lies in His hand, but He has opened His hand upon the cross and today He supplies the want of every sinner who comes and trusts to Him. He who quarrels with that doctrine is an enemy of the cross of Christ. Whether he makes baptism to be the *modus* of salvation, or sets up any rite or ceremony whatsoever, whether divinely appointed or humanly invented, he is an enemy of the cross of Christ.

Circumcision was venerable, it pertained to the fathers, and was the seal of the ancient covenant, but even it became an evil thing when the false teachers would have had the Gentile converts to be circumcised that they might escape from bearing the cross of Christ, and might trust in circumcision instead of in Christ alone, “for,” says Paul, “in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”

The doctrine of justification by faith is the Gospel, I know no other, and I wish to know no other. “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” But alas! there are still many who are enemies of that doctrine, and so are “enemies of the cross of Christ.”

The cross of Christ is sometimes put in Scripture for *the life which is the result of faith in Christ*. What kind of life should that be? Well first, a life of self-denial. No man who is the friend of the cross of Christ will give license to his passions, or indulgence to his appetites. If he does so, he proves that he is the enemy of the cross of Christ.

No man will seek honor for himself who has known that Christ has bought him with His blood. He will not, he cannot, he dare not live for himself, either in the accumulating of wealth, or the getting of fame, or the enjoyment of pleasure. His first, chief, master thought is, “For Jesus Christ all things—all things in him, and for him, and to him, seeing that He has redeemed us with his precious blood.”

They who shirk His service, who take no interest in holy enterprises, who just try to live to themselves—your eaters and your drinkers, your hoarders and your men and women who are ever adorning the body, but never consecrating their souls to God—these are they who are “the enemies of the cross of Christ.” It galls their shoulders, and they will not bear it, so they turn aside to ways of their own.

II. Now, secondly, WHY ARE MEN ENEMIES OF THIS CROSS OF CHRIST?

Frankly, I think that *some do not know why they are*. “Let me tell you the Gospel,” says a kind friend. “I do not want to hear it.” “Here is a little book which has been very useful to many.” “I do not want your books.” Do you not know the liberal minded people that we have in the world now? When they speak, or when they write, it is all about charity and liberality, they hate bigots.

Dear, dear, dear, is it not a wonder that they do not hate themselves because they will not tolerate the very notion of true religion? “Why!” says one, “that Book is not true.” Did you ever read it? “No.” I thought so, we almost always find that the men who reject the New Testament never read it through, and never mean to do so.

Nicodemus wisely asked, “Doth our law judge any man before it hear him?” Our lawless ones do so, and there are multitudes of men, who ought to think themselves as mean as dirt because they never gave Christ a hearing, yet they thrust Him from them. “Oh!” says one, “I should never go inside any of those canting Methodist places.”

No, you are such a wonderful man that you think you can see through a stone wall, and judge of what goes on inside, you do not want to be taught because you imagine you know everything already. I believe that in London, there is a vast amount of prejudice against true religion which is based upon nothing at all. The people do not know what the Gospel is, and in part, this is our hope, for if we can but bring the blessed truth of Christ to bear upon some of these men, it will be like ploughing up virgin soil in the western states of America, we may hope to reap a glorious harvest. God grant that we may!

But there are some who are “enemies of the cross of Christ” for reasons which they would not like to confess, some, *because the cross of Christ hurts their pride*. Why should they need to be pardoned? They have done nothing amiss, they are as good as most people, and a great deal better than many. You speak to one of them, and he says, “Do not talk to me as if you thought I was going to be lost. I do not know anybody who can find fault with me, I really think that I am an example to others.” Just so, and therefore of course you hate the cross of Christ.

No man who is well likes medicine, how we laugh at the doctors when we feel all right! What jests we make about their calling! It is only when we begin to feel strange that we send for a medical man. And it is just so with men spiritually, as long as they are whole, they want not the great Physician. While they think they are righteous, they reject the righteousness of Christ.

Others too, abhor the cross of Christ *because the Gospel is so simple*. They belong to a club, and they take in a Quarterly Review, and though they do not know very much about any one thing, yet they know a little about a great many things. They just get a smattering of various kinds of knowledge and they think they are wonderfully clever. Do you not notice the development of their foreheads?

You cannot expect that *they* would have anything to do with the Gospel that would suit a servant girl! The religion that fits Jack, and Tom, and Harry, is not grand enough for them, why, they actually had a distant relative who was connected with a baronet, so of course we cannot expect such gentlemen as they are to be saved simply by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is too plain, too easy, for them.

O sirs, would you like to have it made difficult, that all the poor ignorant people in the world might perish just to please you? Let me remind you that such a man as Sir Isaac Newton, who had one of the greatest of all human minds, gloried in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and felt it all too great for him. And in our days, such a truly scientific man as Faraday bowed meekly before the divine Savior, and looked up and found everything in Him. Yet some foolish people think they know better than the eternal God, so they hate the cross. Self-conceit is the reason of much of the opposition of men to Christ.

Besides, although the cross of Christ is lifted high, as the one hope for guilty sinners, *it is the most terribly holy thing beneath the cope of heaven*. That cross, blood red from His dear wounds, frightens away sin, though it draws sinners near itself. That Christ of God, making atonement with bloody sweat, and pierced hands, and anguished cry of “Why hast thou forsaken me?” is the most powerful preacher of godly living whose voice was ever heard among the sons of men. Not only do sins acknowledged to be black by society in general flee from the light of the cross, but even secret sins fly before the blaze of God’s mingled vengeance and love upon the accursed tree.

The cross is the birthplace of Puritans—the men who must be clean, and who will not touch your filthy world and its amusements, and nine-tenths of its engagements. These are the men who have sat beneath the midday midnight of a dying Savior’s griefs, and heard Him cry, “I thirst,” as He bore the guilt of sinners. But alas! multitudes of men do not want holiness, they want their harlots, they want their wine, they want their carnivals of vice, they want their selfishness, and they want everything that Christ does not give, so they cry, “Not this man, but Barabbas,” and they make the awful choice of sin as they neglect their Lord. These are “the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

III. I cannot go further into that painful part of the subject, for time fails me, and I want next to inquire, WHAT ARE THE MARKS OF THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH?

Paul is evidently alluding here to some who professed to be followers of Christ, but who were really “the enemies of the cross of Christ.” I do believe, brethren, that the description given of them is true of many in our day. Here is what the apostle said of them, “Whose God is their belly.” That surely means *self-indulgence*, and applies to professing Christians who never restrain their appetites, or their desires, or their passions—who are sensual while they boast of being spiritual, who are altogether given up to self-indulgence, and yet claim to be followers of the Man of sorrows who gave up everything for the good of others. That is the first kind of “enemies of the cross of Christ.”

Next are those who are the subjects of *shameful pride*, “whose glory is in their shame.” That is to say, they boast of things of which they ought to be ashamed. Do you not know some who can grind down the wages of their workmen, and boast that they have done a clever and businesslike thing, and then go and “take the sacrament”?

Think of the poor starving needlewomen who, if they sew their souls away, cannot get bread enough to appease their hunger, I do not know who it is who oppresses them so cruelly, but I should not wonder if their taskmasters do not even think that they will go to heaven, I shall be surprised if they are not very greatly mistaken.

Then there are others who are the prey of avarice, and they boast of what they can save. They never give anything to the poor, they seem to think that it is wrong to do so, they even found a Society to stop it. God gives to the evil as well as to the good, but they give to no one, they call their methods, “political economy,” and glory that they save so much which others would have given away.

As to the cause of God, one wretched creature boasted that *his* soul did not cost him a shilling a year. Somebody said that such a sum would be too great an expense for such a miserable soul as his, and we hardly wonder at the sarcasm of the remark. Alas! that there should be those who glory in that kind of thing—pinching, grinding, money loving wretches. Some of these are even called Christians, but all the while “they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

There are others who profess to be Christians, who go about talking to young people, and trying to indoctrinate them with false views. Sometimes, they cause the faith even of the old to stagger, and they draw one and another aside to this novelty and to that, which is not according to the Scripture. I believe that such people are the worst “enemies of the cross of Christ.” When the devil is in the pulpit, he *is* a devil. When we get bad doctrine proclaimed by ministers of Christ themselves, then have we indeed “the enemies of the cross of Christ,” and there are nowadays plenty of them of whom I would speak even weeping, as I say that “they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

Paul adds one other description of these “enemies of the cross of Christ,” that is, *worldliness*, “who mind earthly things.” This is a very close home-thrust to many professing Christians. Do they ever help the Sunday school? Oh, no, no! Sunday school? They hope somebody or other attends to it, but it is no concern of theirs. Do they ever aid in a Mission? A Mission? Why, they do not get the shutters up till so late at night that they cannot help in mission work, they have enough to do to look after themselves.

But are they doing nothing at all for Christ? No, nothing, and for twenty years together, nothing. What are they minding then? Well, I do not know, only I am sure that they cannot be minding anything but “earthly things.” That is all. This is the catechism that they go through every day, “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” That is all they live for.

Now, do not be deceived, if this is true concerning you, you are no friend of Christ, for those who belong to Christ admit that they are not their own, but they are bought with a price, and they have some higher and nobler objective than that which takes up the lives of worldlings. They are living for God and for eternity, for Christ and for the good of men, and their great wish is to lay themselves out for the glory of God and the benefit of the human race.

God grant that we may not be found among these characters, “whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things”!

IV. For next, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THESE PEOPLE?

We are told that their “end is destruction.” There will be *a total destruction of their profession*. There will be *a destruction of all their hopes*. There will be *a destruction of all their happiness*. There will be *a destruction of themselves*, and they shall stand forever as destroyed and ruined things, ghastly exhibitions of what sin can do, and what must follow upon a false profession, or any other form of enmity to the cross of Christ.

V. Now lastly, How SHOULD WE ACT IN THIS MATTER?

If there are still such people as the apostle describes, what have you and I to do concerning them?

Well first, some of us have to *give frequent warning*, “Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

O friends, there are so many outside the professing church who are “the enemies of the cross of Christ” that it might break one’s heart to think of them, but those who are inside the church, professors who never knew Christ, who have often come to the communion table, but have never had fellowship with Christ, who are quite satisfied with their outward religion while their hearts are rotten through and through—it is an awful and a dreadful thing that there should be such. But we are bound to keep on exhorting one another and warning one another because there are such “enemies of the cross of Christ” even inside His nominal church.

And let me add, if exhortations are frequently to be given, the *warnings ought to be as frequently taken*. How you and I ought often to pass the apostolic question round, “Lord, is it I?” Suppose He stood on this platform, and lifted up those pierced hands, and said in majestic sorrow, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, one of you shall betray me,” would not that question stir us all to anguish? Well, let it do so, see to it that you make sure work for eternity, my brethren, and while I talk to you, I am talking to myself as well—oh, see to it that you do not have a flimsy profession, a name to live when you are really dead!

What is religion worth if it is not in the heart? It is like the pageantry which surrounds the grave—the pomp, the pall, the hearse—death decently covered up. May God, of His infinite mercy, save us from having a dead profession, for as the Lord liveth, He will not endure dead professors! “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living,” and He will one day say, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” These “enemies of the cross of Christ” “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.

But while we speak of these people, *it becomes us to be very tender*, for the apostle says, “of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping.” Why weeping? Because it is an awful thing for men to hear the divine and final sentence, “Depart, ye cursed.” I should not like to think of anybody here who will have that for his portion at the day of judgment, but I would be a gross traitor to your souls if I did not also add that I cannot help fearing that this will be the lot of some of you. You have never come to Christ, perhaps you have professed to do so, or possibly, you have neither done it nor professed to do it, but you are openly and avowedly antagonistic to the cross of Christ. May God’s grace convert you! Else we may well weep over you that you should die in your sins.

But we have further tears because of the mischief that such sinners do. “Enemies of the cross of Christ” do a world of damage to wife and children, neighbors and friends. “One sinner destroyeth much good.” One graceless life is a great robbery of the treasury of God. One life spent in distinct opposition to the Gospel of Jesus is a terrible thing.

A Scotchman took some thistle seed to Australia that he might see a thistle grow on his farm. He only wanted one or two rare old Scotch thistles to make him think that he was at home, but now, thousands of acres are covered with this horrible weed which nobody can destroy, and which has become the grossest nuisance of the region.

One seed of sin may cover a continent with crime. God save us then, from being numbered with “the enemies of the cross of Christ”! Why should we not all come to the cross now? The best homage we can pay to Jesus is to come and receive Him as our Savior. Let us do so, let us sing this verse while we do it—

*“Just as I am—without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!”*

Let those who can truly sing it, do so, even if they never sang it before. God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PHILIPPIANS 3

Verse 1. *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*

As much as to say, “If this were the last sentence that I should write to you, I would say, ‘Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.’ It is your privilege, it is your duty, to rejoice in God—not in your health, your wealth, your children, your prosperity, but in the Lord.” There is the unchanging and unbounded source of joy. It will do you no harm to rejoice in the Lord, the more you rejoice in Him, the more spiritually minded will you become.

“Finally, my brethren.” That is, even to the end, not with you the bitter end, but even to the end of life, rejoice in the Lord. Make this the *finis* of everything, the end of every day, the end of every year, the end of life. “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” Blessed is that religion in which it is a duty to be happy.

1. *To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*

Saying the same thing over and over again is safe, for your minds do not catch the truth at the first hearing, and your memories are slippery.

2. *Beware of dogs,—*

Men of a doggish, captious, selfish spirit. In Paul’s day, there were some who were called Cynics, that is to say, dogs, “Beware of dogs.”

2. *Beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.*

By which Paul meant those Jews who made a great point of circumcision, he calls them here “the cutters,” for they mangled and cut the church of God in pieces, “Beware of the concision.”

3. *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

These are three marks of the true Israel of God, Have you all of them—worshipping God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh?

4. *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.*

If anybody might, Paul might. If birth, if education, or if external religiousness could have saved anybody in the world, it would have saved Saul of Tarsus.

4-5. *If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day,—*

The ritual was observed even to the hour in his case.

5. *Of the stock of Israel,—*

Not an Edomite or a Samaritan, but “of the stock of Israel,” and of the very center of that stock.

5. *Of the tribe of Benjamin,—*

Which remained with Judah, faithful, long after the ten tribes had gone aside.

5. *An Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;*

That is, one who observed all the minutiae and details of the ceremonial law, and a good deal more—the traditions of the elders which hung like moss about the old stone of Jewish ceremonialism. Paul had observed all that.

6. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;*

He was most zealous in the cause that he thought right. Bitterly, cruelly, even to the death, did he persecute the believers in Jesus.

6. *Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

Paul had been kept from the vices into which many fell. In his young days, he had been pure, and all his days, he had been upright and sincere. As far as he knew, to the best of his light, he had observed the law of God.

In another place, he calls himself the chief of sinners, and so he was, because he persecuted the church of God; but in another sense, I may say of him that there is no man who stood so good a chance of being justified by works as Paul did, if there could have been any justification in that way.

7. *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*

His faith in Jesus reversed all his former estimates, so that his gains he counted to be losses. He thought it so much the worse, concerning zeal, to have persecuted the church, and so much to his injury to have imagined that he was blameless in the presence of God.

8. *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung,—*

Offal, refuse, garbage—

8. *That I may win Christ,—*

He had every opportunity of advancement. He was a fine scholar, and might have reached the highest degree in connection with the Sanhedrim and the synagogue, but he thought nothing of all that, he threw it all away as worthless, and declared that this was his ambition: “That I may win Christ,”—

9. *And be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

It must be more glorious to be justified by God than by ourselves. It must be more safe to wear the righteousness of Christ than to wear our own. Nothing can so dignify our manhood as to have Christ Himself to be “the Lord our Righteousness.” This Paul chose in preference to everything else.

10-11. *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

See to what Paul is looking forward—resurrection—and therefore he lets this life go as of secondary importance. He is willing to suffer as Christ suffered, and to die as Christ died. You and I may never be called to make that great sacrifice, but if we are true followers of Christ, we shall be prepared for it. If ever it should happen that Christ and our life shall be put in competition, we must not deliberate for a moment, for Christ is all, and we must be ready to give up all for Christ.

12. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect:*

He does not say that anybody has been perfect, but he does say that he was not so himself, and I should think that any man who believed himself to be better than Paul would thereby prove at once that he was not perfect, for he must be sadly lacking in humility.

12. *But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

“All that Christ meant me to be, I want to be. All that Christ meant to give me, I want to have. All that He meant me to do, I want to do, to apprehend, to lay hold of that for which I am laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”

13. *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:*

That is Paul’s judgment concerning himself, he has not yet attained to the full all that the religion of Christ can give him.

13-14. *But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Always making progress—throwing himself into it, having the reward before him, the prize of perfection in Christ, and running towards it with all his might.

15. *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect,—*

Or “would be perfect.”

15. *Be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

I admire that sentence. If any brother has not reached a full knowledge of truth, let us not condemn him, or cast him out of our company, but say to him, “God shall reveal even this unto you.”

16. *Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*

There are some points upon which we are all agreed. There is some standing ground where the babe in grace may meet with the man in Christ Jesus. Well, as far as we see eye to eye, let us co-operate with one another, let us have our hearts knit together in a holy unanimity. “Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

There are some people who are always looking out for points of difference, their motto seems to be, “Whereinsoever we differ in anything, let us split away from one another.” Their great idea is that by dividing we shall conquer. The fact is that, by separating ourselves from one another, we shall miss all hope of strength, and play into the hands of the adversaries.

17. *Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

For the true servant of Christ teaches by his life as much as by his words.

18-20. *(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation—*

Or citizenship—

20-21. *Is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body,—*

Vile so far that it has been defiled by sin, vile in comparison with that body which shall be—“Who shall change our vile body,” the body of our humiliation,—

21. *That it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—289, 649, 642

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.